DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 547 CS 507 232

AUTHOR Aust, Charles Francis
TITLE Judgments of Well-Being after Exposure to Televised Bad and Good News.
PUB DATE May 85
NOTE 92p.; M.A. Thesis, Indiana University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Master Theses (042) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Audience Response; College Students; Emotional Response; Factor Analysis; Higher Education; *Life Satisfaction; *Mass Media Effects; *News Media; Television Research; *Television Viewing; *Well Being
IDENTIFIERS Indiana University

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of the affective nature of television news on satisfaction with an individual's own life as well as on an individual's outlook regarding good fortune and misfortune. Subjects, 30 male and 30 female undergraduates at Indiana University, viewed a variety of news stories and completed two questionnaires, one rating the news stories on five dimensions of emotional content, and one assessing subjects' satisfaction with and expectations for various aspects of their lives. Results indicated that (1) bad news tends to be judged as more interesting than good news; (2) bad news tends to make viewers feel more apprehensive about potential harm to themselves than does good news; and (3) bad news may make viewers feel less emotionally stable than good news. Results gave no support whatsoever to the proposal that visually graphic bad news is appealing to viewers because it eventually makes them feel better about their own lives. (Eight tables of data are included, and 35 references are attached. Appendixes include subject response forms, factor analysis pattern for news story measures, and factor analysis pattern for measures of life issues.) (SR)

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JUDGMENTS OF WELL-BEING
AFTER EXPOSURE
TO TELEVISED BAD AND GOOD NEWS

Charles Francis Aust

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of Telecommunications
Indiana University
May 1985

CS507232

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Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

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November 30, 1984

03

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"We stand on the shoulders of giants"...
I have been blessed by the support of many in completing this research: From my parents a powerful model of perseverance and faith; Encouragement and assistance in various forms from Stacey Jones, Molly Mayhead, Marianne Pellett, Sally Cook, Robin and Dave Weber, Wayne Oudekerk, Rick Cain and John Spraker; Energizing and refreshing sunrise bike rides with Janie Jesko; Long-distance yet strong and true love from Mare and Jim Roccio and the rest of my family.

Special thanks are due Jim and Karen Weaver for statistical support and great southern hospitality, imported into the Hoosier Heartland.

Dolf Zillmann, my thesis chair and academic advisor, inspired, encouraged and worked with me, patient and professional through it all. My respect and gratitude toward him are deep.

And of course, thanks and praise to the Great Professor of All.

C. F. A.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACCEPTANCE PAGE ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iii
LIST OF TABLES v

Chapter Page

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Traditional Explanations 6
Alternative Explanations 11
Experimental Design 17

II. METHOD 19

Subjects 19
Materials 19
Manipulation 20
Procedure 23

III. RESULTS 28

Assessment of Effectiveness of Manipulation . . 28
Effect of News on Assessment of Life Issues . . 38
News and Emotional Stability 44

IV. DISCUSSION 46

REFERENCES 57

APPENDIX A - SUBJECT RESPONSE FORMS 60

Consent Form for Human Subjects Research . . . 61
News Viewing Form 62
Attitudes About Life Issues Form 64
TV Program Preferences Form 72

APPENDIX B - FACTOR ANALYSIS PATTERN FOR NEWS STORY MEASURES 74

APPENDIX C - FACTOR ANALYSIS PATTERN FOR MEASURES OF LIFE ISSUES 76

VITA 80

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Mean Scores of Arousal Quality of Types of News	30
2.	Mean Scores of the Amount of Interest in Type of News	31
3.	Mean Scores of the Hedonic Quality of Types of News	33
4.	Mean Scores for Arousal/Attention Factor . . .	36
5.	Mean Scores of Hedonic Quality	37
6.	Mean Scores of the Effect of Type of News on Harm Apprehension	43
7.	Mean Scores of Self-Judged Emotional Stability by Type of News	45
8.	Comparative Ranking of Types of News on Arousal, Interest and Hedonic Quality . . .	47

INTRODUCTION

Television is the source from which a majority of people get their news and is viewed as the most credible mass media source of news. At least half of the viewers feel television news programs meet viewers' "overall needs for news" at least adequately or excellently (Griffith, 1981; "TV news," 1982; and Roper, 1983).

Television news coverage has increased in recent years, with plans being made by the networks for further expansion in the future ("NBC trying," 1982; "Land rush," 1982; and "Fresh start," 1983). Public opinion polls indicate that between 32 and 52 percent of viewers feel evening network news should be expanded to one hour (Schwartz, 1982). A recent estimate for average newscast viewing was given as four hours per week (Henry, 1983). Apparently there is an audience for television news and more advertising dollars to be earned by the news providers.

Commercial television in this country is operated as a private industry. Its major source of revenue is from advertisers who purchase air time to send messages about their products and services to the viewing audience. The television networks program their content in a way that will attract the highest number of viewers. In this way,

they can charge profitable prices for air time and thus maximize revenues. News shows as well as entertainment programs generate such revenue.

Turning attention to the content of news shows, there appear to be at least moderate amounts of bad news, that is, stories depicting victimization, suffering and other aversive conditions besetting real human beings. In one study, viewers named television as the medium which most emphasized the "bad things going on in America" (Bowers, 1973). Helplessness, characterized by lack of control or predictability, was found to be a major characteristic of news stories (Levine, 1977). Bad news is frequently presented with more visual emphasis than other news (Lowry, 1971).

Graber (1979) argued that crime news on the three national networks and two local stations in Chicago received ample coverage and "by social significance criteria, it is excessive," (p. 91) compared to other types of news. She suggests that the large amount of coverage of crimes is satisfying a consumer demand. Street crime receives disproportionate coverage compared to white collar crime. The coverage also paints a distorted picture of the relative frequency of street crimes by exaggerating murder, rape and assault, while presenting disproportion-

ately low amounts of robberies, burglaries and thefts.

Haskins (1981) claims that the news programs of the national networks "may be the heaviest dealers in bad news" (p. 13). He also states that "bad news is more prominently displayed than other news in both newspapers and television -- longer stories, more photographs and upfront placement" (p. 13).

It can be argued that a crime or other violence against a person is more significant than a crime or violence against property because of the social significance attached to violation of the individual's well-being and functioning in the community, as well as the possible threat to the entire community if such activity were to go unchecked. This argument relates to the mass media function of surveillance of the environment to inform the viewer of potential risks and benefits (Lasswell, 1948, 1960). Such arguments are not without merit. Information is essential to the process of addressing community problems and dealing with them effectively.

Yet television news providers seem to have become more cognizant to the advantageous use of liveliness and drama to attract and keep viewers, utilizing consultation services such as Frank Magid and Associates to put into

use the most attractive set, style, technology and on-air personalities possible. The portrayal of conflict and human ordeal contributes to that liveliness and drama, and appears to be regularly featured on newscasts. As a veteran field reporter for a Los Angeles television station put it, "Conflict is really important to video. The news directors love action. Fires make great video" (Dan Drew, personal communication, June 18, 1984).

Bogart (1980) has argued that sometimes the distinction blurs between what is information and what is entertainment. He suggests this happens with television news, where the motives of news viewers to be informed and entertained can also blur. The viewer might not only be seeking information, but also an affective experience that does more than simply inform and satisfy curiosity. Perhaps the news provides such an experience.

It seems a common phenomenon that media consumers do not shy away from unpleasant news. In fact, they seem drawn to read, watch and listen to reports of bad news. Scanning the headlines of the front page at the breakfast table, watching the nightly news during supper, or finishing off the long day with the late night news report all are examples of behavior we have seen, heard about or engaged in.

If we can assume that at least a moderate amount of the news is unpleasant in programs and newspapers, why do people actively seek it out? In addition, why do the media seem to present not only the minimum of information about unpleasant events, but actually present dramatic photographs or videotape, often including interviews with victims or eyewitnesses? The news providers are perhaps intuitively aware or are working under the assumption or belief that such style and content are not aversive to the majority of viewers. If they suspected or were convinced that such material discouraged an appreciable amount of viewers from watching, the news providers would present this unpleasant news less vividly or perhaps minimize it as much as possible. The media depend on ability to attract the most audience members possible to maximize ad revenues. So it stands to reason that they would, to some extent, act in accordance with that objective in presenting the news. Following this logic to its end, it seems apparent that graphically presented unpleasant news is of interest to viewers and is frequently offered by the media in vivid, dramatic form. It is not the intent to suggest that the media do this coldly or with disregard for human suffering. The point is that people seem attracted to bad news that is

presented. Let us look at some explanations that have been offered to account for this phenomenon.

Traditional Explanations

Television is a popular and expanding source for news, and it seems evident that television news coverage contains at least moderate amounts of bad news. Yet people watch it in spite of this distressful and seemingly aversive content. The question naturally emerges of why viewers expose themselves to such a viewing diet. Does the negative news on television provide some kind of gratification or pleasurable purpose for the viewer? Several ideas have been offered to attempt to provide an explanation for this apparently contradictory viewing phenomenon.

Surveillance Function

As mentioned previously, Lasswell's (1948,1960) idea of surveillance of the environment has been suggested as a function the mass media serve for viewers. The media warn about threatening conditions and inform about potentially beneficial conditions. Reports about threatening weather, polluted drinking water or the escape of criminals from a

nearby prison are examples of important news stories of high utility to the viewers.

In the portrayal of bad news, however, the stories tend to be of low utility to the viewer in his/her immediate environment. Typically, misfortunes have occurred already. The aftermath is described and threats no longer exist or do not extend to the viewer's environment. The violent head-on collision on a rural road, the devastation caused by floods or tornadoes in some distant region or the drug-related murders committed in a large urban area have low informational utility to the viewer. On rare occasions, such news might be followed by an expose or in-depth report about the road hazard that caused the collision, the storm-prone nature of a geographic area or the strong relationship between drug dealing and violence. These reports draw valuable attention to community problems about which civic and politically active viewers need to be informed, but have little practical value to the typical viewer. Many bad news stories, therefore, do not serve primarily, if at all, the surveillance function described by Lasswell.

Morbid Curiosity

Morbid curiosity has been suggested as a reason for viewer interest in and willing exposure to negative news (Haskins, 1984). However, curiosity as a motive for exposure is not limited to bad news. A person can be curious about various types and qualities of information. And the word "morbid" is a value judgment placed on curiosity about bad news, suggesting that the curiosity is somehow unhealthy or pathological. The latter might be the case but does not have to be so. Curiosity or interest in bad news might serve the viewer in some healthy or productive way.

Little has been offered by the morbid curiosity explanation except to identify curiosity as a possible motive for watching bad news and placing a negative value judgment on the behavior. This does not supply a sufficient explanation for willing exposure to bad news, even though some viewers might on occasion exhibit truly morbid curiosity in the act of seeking out and watching bad news.

Sensation-Seeking

Tiger (1984) suggested the viewer seeks out stimulation from negative news to fulfill a need for dangerous "fight or flight" stimulation that once was obtained by our

ancestors in hunting and gathering activities necessary for survival.

In a related approach, Zuckerman (1974) has proposed a sensation-seeking theory in which people seek out intense sensations (i.e., high arousal levels) based on biological need for such stimulation. A person can seek and experience such sensation through a variety of stressful experiences. Zuckerman contends that the behavior referred to as morbid curiosity about bad news is also a manifestation of the sensation-seeking motive. The desire to see and hear bad news would be considered a form of both morbid curiosity and a manifestation of sensation-seeking behavior, according to Zuckerman (1984).

However, it can be countered that moments of stress, anxiety and otherwise unpleasant arousal are noxious, aversive conditions, not to be enjoyed but endured. These sensations in and of themselves are not enjoyable. Survival, successful endurance or passage through such experiences to a state of safety, relief or calmness are the enjoyable experiences to be had after intensely negative arousal. Exposure to bad news is not enjoyable in and of itself (Veitch and Griffitt, 1976). An explanation other than sensation-seeking is required to understand interest in watching bad news.

Sadistic Tendencies and Disposition

There are people who enjoy seeing others suffer just for the sake of seeing them suffer, or in order to experience some pleasurable sensation from the signs of distress elicited by the suffering, or because of a hatred or dislike toward suffering persons. In such cases, the misfortune of the suffering victim is the fortune of the sadistic observer. The same can be true of bad news. One person's bad news might be another person's good news if, for some reason, the observer has a negative disposition toward the sufferer.

It is proposed here, however, that the viewer typically is either indifferent or somewhat positively disposed toward the victims of misfortune shown in bad news. Generally, the persons in bad news are common citizens whom the general public and the viewers should have no reason to dislike or hate. But exceptions may exist. A viewer might dislike a political figure to such an extent that the injury or death of the politician is good news to that viewer. Such situations are not considered in this study of attraction to bad news. For the purposes of this research, bad news refers to the misfortune of common human beings toward whom the viewer holds at worst, a neutral, or at best, a very positive disposition.

Zillmann (1980) outlined the dynamics of suspense in drama, which relates to this idea of viewer disposition to people featured in the news. He showed that if a character toward whom the viewer feels a positive or neutral disposition (as opposed to a negative disposition) experiences aversive outcomes, the viewer experiences distress. Likewise, if the not-disliked character experiences desired outcomes, the viewer experiences delight. It follows that, if the viewer has no reason to dislike the characters shown victimized in bad news stories or if the viewer finds some reason to like that character, the viewer most likely will perceive that news as bad news.

Alternative Explanations

Why do viewers engage in seemingly illogical, irrational actions by exposing themselves to distress-producing material? What process is occurring that draws viewers to watch bad news on television and keeps them attracted day after day? Viewers, at some point after experiencing anxiety, distress or sadness from seeing the bad news, might spontaneously compare themselves to persons featured in one or more of the bad news stories. A survey of adults who

reported watching a minimum of one newscast a week found a strong relationship between general news viewing and viewing to "realize that my life is not so bad after all" (Levy, 1977, p. 114). In another survey, among other reasons, it was found that people watched the news to be reassured that they were "better off" than most others (Levy, 1978).

A contrast effect could be involved in which the viewer's life situation appears enhanced because of its contrast to the unfortunate circumstances being endured by the persons in the news. In other words, the viewer's life situation suddenly appears better because of the observed bad lot of news story characters, than it would be perceived by the viewer if he/she had not seen such bad news stories. Several theoretical propositions suggest that this could be the underlying explanation of the attraction to bad news.

Social Comparison Processes

Festinger (1954) proposed a theory of social comparison processes in which he stated that people have a need to evaluate themselves. He proposed that in the absence of objective, non-social means, people will use others as their standard of comparison. This theory has undergone empirical testing regarding movement into and maintenance of member-

ship in groups, self-judgment of opinions and abilities, interpersonal attraction, and reaction to an actual disaster (Latane, 1966). However, comparison of self on any criteria to figures appearing in the mass media, based on Festinger's theory, has received little attention in experimental research. It is suggested here that the theory might yield useful explanatory results in an examination of the effect of bad news on the viewer. Using aversive life situations endured by persons portrayed in the news reports as a standard of comparison, the viewer might make a more positive judgment about his/her own life situation, compared to viewers who see neutral or good news.

This was supported in a non-media study by Morse and Gergen (1970). In the presence of a person who had highly desirable social traits, the subject experienced a decrease in self-esteem. The opposite condition, exposure of the subject to a person with socially undesirable traits, increased the subject's self-esteem.

> These findings are not only consistent with the proposition that a person may use others to gauge his own self-worth, but extend the range of phenomena to which social comparison theory has been applied. As a result of others' characteristics appearing more desirable or less desirable than his own, a person's generalized self-estimate is displaced downward or upward (p. 154).

Adaptation-Level Theory

Another applicable theory to be considered is adaptation-level theory (Helson, 1964), which suggests that the organism establishes a reference point based on prior experience, and uses this reference point to judge subsequent experiences. It is thought that viewers of television who see negative news might tend to judge their own past experiences, recent or distant, as less negative or even as positive, compared to the experiences of persons described in the negative news. Empirical evidence exists to support such a prediction. Brickman (1975) demonstrated that subjects would value their own performance more highly when they compare it with those performing not as well, than when such a comparison cannot be made.

Contrast Effect

Labelled as "contrast effect in emotional response," Manstead, Wagner and MacDonald (1983) showed that the affective response to horror films and comedy scenes differed depending on order of presentation. When seeing comedy after horror, ratings of pleasantness, relaxation and funniness of comedy scenes were enhanced. When seeing horror after comedy, ratings of the frightening quality of horror

scenes were enhanced. Contrast effects were similarly obtained in relation to erotic visual material and attraction (Kenrick, Gutierres, and Goldberg, 1982; Weaver, Masland and Zillmann, 1984). Such contrast effects are also suggested here as the dynamic that could help explain television news viewers' positive rating of their life situation after seeing negative news.

Suspense Theory

Comparison via bad news in order to feel better about one's own life can be viewed in relation to Zillmann's (1980) theory of suspense. When a liked character undergoes aversive experiences, the viewer finds displeasure in watching this occur. If the outcome is uncertain and there is a high but not definite probability that a feared outcome will occur, the noxious feelings of suspense are powerful. In much the same way, a person featured in a bad news story who is potentially or actually experiencing a feared outcome and might experience even more trials and tribulations in the future, stirs in the viewer these unpleasant affective responses of disappointment, sadness and possibly suspense.

Where this application to bad news departs from the

suspense paradigm is in the outcome. Viewers of suspense films experience maximum pleasure and relief when the liked character achieves a positive outcome after almost certain defeat. In bad news, this is unlikely. A happy resolution to the dilemma usually does not ensue. Yet because the viewing of such a dilemma triggers unpleasant feelings in the viewer, he/she might seek a way to alleviate such aversive feelings. One way to accomplish this might be to look at one's own life to obtain relief, to observe a less aversive life condition for oneself in contrast to the more unfortunate conditions the news story participants are enduring. In this way, one's assessment of own well-being might be enhanced.

The cognitive switch from sadness at exposure to the bad news to relief and heightened satisfaction toward one's life makes excitation-transfer theory applicable (Zillmann, 1971). If residual physiological arousal lingers from the distress reaction to the bad news, such arousal might transfer to and enhance the reaction of relief and satisfaction with one's own life.

Summary

To summarize, it is suggested that the viewer of bad news reacts with distress to such news, but subsequently

feels an enhanced appreciation of his/her life situation because the viewer spontaneously compares it to the life of the person(s) portrayed in the news. This might be the case because the viewer's life is, in fact, much better or because the aversive conditions depicted in the news story give the viewer's life the appearance of being better. In addition, the viewer's feelings of contentment or relief might be enhanced by transfer of arousal from the distress reaction to the relief reaction. Alternatively, it might be possible that good news causes a deflation in the viewer's level of contentment, based on these same comparison dynamics. Even news stories that have little or no affective arousal qualities of either happiness or sadness might cause the viewer to feel less contentment with his/her life situation compared to viewers who are exposed to bad news.

Experimental Design

This study examines the influence of the affective nature of television news on satisfaction with one's own life as well as on one's outlook regarding good fortunes and misfortunes. More specifically, the affective type of news is being manipulated and treated as the independent variable.

Perceived satisfaction and prospects constitute the dependent variable.

This study attempts to evaluate the proposal that visually graphic bad news is appealing to viewers because it eventually makes them feel better about their own lives. In a 2 x 5 factorial design factor A is gender (male and female) and factor B is the affective quality of television news stories (all good, neutral plus good, neutral, neutral plus bad, all bad).

To determine whether the proposed manipulations of the affective quality of the news stories produce the desired differentiations of emotional content, subjects rated the news stories on five dimensions: how arousing, interesting, pleasant, disturbing and absorbing they are. This set of scales was administered in the form of a questionnaire labelled "News Viewing Form" (See Appendix A).

To measure satisfaction and prospects, subjects were later given a questionnaire with imbedded scales assessing their satisfaction with and their expectations concerning various aspects of their lives, such as possessions, health, physical appearance and avoidance of harm. This "Attitudes About Life Issues" form (See Appendix A) was assumed to entice subjects to reflect about these various issues within three to five minutes after exposure to the stimulus material.

METHOD

Subjects

Thirty males and thirty females, recruited from an undergraduate telecommunications course at Indiana University, voluntarily participated in the experimental session. Subjects received extra credit from the course instructor.

Materials

News stories were recorded from over-the-air broadcasts of three Indianapolis and the three national commercial networks' news programs, ABC, CBS and NBC. Special criteria were used in making story selections. Only the stories having little or no informational utility to the subjects in their immediate day-to-day functioning were considered. Stories were selected which related in no way to the community of Bloomington, in which the subjects were currently residing.

The items for inclusion in the stimulus material were selected also on the basis of depicting only United States citizens, avoiding the possible extraneous influence of bias for or against citizens of other countries. Political bias was avoided by omitting stories about political issues or personalities toward which the subjects could have

strong dispositional feelings.

In line with suspense theory (Zillmann, 1980) and the consideration of disposition toward characters, news stories were selected which involve characters about whom the subjects were likely to have at worst a neutral disposition and at best a positive disposition. In other words, the viewer either felt indifferent or had some amount of positive regard for the story characters. As mentioned earlier, if a viewer has negative regard for a character who suffers misfortune, that viewer might consider such an event to be good news.

The events and conditions described in the stories minimized indications of specific times and dates in the calendar year. It was hoped that in this way subjects would perceive the events as recent or current.

Every news item included visual coverage of the scenes and people involved in the event, with only four out of 20 stories not including verbal accounts and reactions from participants or observers of the events.

Manipulation

The five affective qualities of the news conditions were manipulated by varying the circumstances endured or experienced by the characters in the stories.

The good news stories portrayed pleasurable, beneficial or joyful events or outcomes being experienced or reported as experienced by the characters. Such news attempted to convey that the participants and observers in the stories were experiencing pleasure, benefit and/or happiness.

Neutral news stories portrayed events or conditions that were neither occasions for joy nor sadness for the persons portrayed in the stories. Such news attempted to convey that the participants and observers in the stories were experiencing no particular positive or negative emotions. It should be kept in mind that the way the story "comes across" to the viewer contributes to its ability to provoke affect. The stories selected for the neutral condition do not refer to emotional state or provocation of emotions as the good and bad news stories do. On paper, the neutral story descriptions might indicate a likelihood to provoke pleasurable or aversive emotions, but were selected for their tendency not to do so in actuality.

The bad news stories portrayed aversive, harmful, distressing events or conditions being experienced or reported as experienced by real humans. Such news conveyed that the participants and observers were experiencing displeasure, harm or victimization at the hands of other persons or natural causes.

The content theme and total viewing time for each condition follows:

ALL GOOD: (1) Solar eclipse observances, (2) Spelling bee winner, (3) Automobile factory workers rehired, (4) State-wide convention of bicyclists, (5) Celebration of mass transit start-up in Miami, (6) Million dollar lottery winner and (7) San Francisco cable cars renew operation. Viewing time - 9:30.

NEUTRAL: (1) Contract awarded to Educational Testing Service for Indiana teacher certification, (2) Crop dusting technique using low-flying planes, (3) Road near Indianapolis for which neither state or local officials want responsibility, (4) Statue art exhibit of life-like statues, (5) Old-time electric trolley car being moved for renovation and display, (6) Pending public utility legislation described by legislator, and (7) Small banks competing and "holding their own" against big banks. Viewing time - 10:30.

ALL BAD: (1) Six-year-old boy missing for several weeks from parents' home, (2) Three driver-education students killed in four-car accident, (3) Wisconsin town devastated by tornado, (4) Man killed in motorcycle crash, (5) Boston tenement fire kills at least 16, (6) Man fatally shoots six at nightclub, and (7) Eight teens perish in amusement park fun house fire. Viewing time - 9:25.

NEUTRAL PLUS GOOD: Same as neutral condition except replacement of #2 and #7 of neutral condition with #2 and #7 of good condition. Viewing time - 8:45.

NEUTRAL PLUS BAD: Same as neutral condition except replacement of #2 and #7 of neutral condition with #2 and #7 of bad condition. Viewing time - 9:30.

The last two conditions listed here were included to represent a more typical mixture of television news programs than exclusively good news or bad news. Additionally, it was feared that in the all good and all bad conditions subjects might become cognizant of the fact that the impact of such news was being studied. The selected news stories for each condition were edited together so that they would appear sequentially without delay or interruption. The first story was preceded by "color black" video and the last story was followed by "color black" video.

Procedure

The experiment was conducted in ten sessions, involving three males and three females in each session, at the Institute for Communication Research at Indiana University. The testing room was arranged so that the males and females sat separately. Male subjects faced a television monitor with their backs to the female subjects and the experimental equipment. Female subjects faced a second television monitor with their backs to the male subjects and the experimental equipment, which was positioned on a 4' by 8' conference table between the two groups.

Equipment included two Sony Trinitron color television monitors on which to view the news stories, a Sony video

cassette recorder on which to play the news stories, and a Sony audio cassette player on which to play recorded instructions addressed to the subjects. An Esterline Angus event recorder was used to give the appearance of a machine recording skin temperature of the subjects. This machine was connected to a control box with numbered switches representing each subject. From this control box led six wires with flat discs about ½" in diameter attached to the ends of the wires, representing thermistors that ostensibly would read subjects' fingertip skin temperature while they viewed the news stories.

The experimenter waited until all subjects arrived in the vestibule, then seat-d them in the large first floor conference room used for the experimental session. After thanking subjects for coming and reminding them that they would earn extra credit for participating, the experimenter played an audio cassette containing instructions for the experiment.

The subjects were told they would be taking part in two different experiments, the first involving reactions to television news stories and the second dealing with their attitudes about various life issues in relation to their selection of television programs they like to watch. The exact procedures were then described. After subjects signed

the Consent Form for Human Subjects Research (See Appendix A), the experimenter resumed the taped instructions, which described the way the thermistors would be attached to the subjects' fingers. The tape repeated the assurance that these sensors were completely harmless and there was no danger whatsoever. After the experimenter attached the sensors to their fingers, he simulated a reading of temperatures on the event recorder as if to make sure the equipment was working. He pressed six buttons on the control box, producing six clicking sounds on the event recorder. He then started the videotape, which contained the news condition which had been randomly assigned to that particular experimental session. The experimenter sat to the side and behind the subjects in order to be out of view during their exposure to the tape. Every two minutes the experimenter again produced the clicking sound of the event recorder to simulate the recording of the subjects' physiological responses to the news stories. This equipment and sensor use were intended as an ostensible purpose for exposing the subjects to the stimulus material, and lent an appearance of exact scientific measurement of physiological reactions to the news items. It should be noted that no skin temperature readings were actually obtained.

After the videotape ended, the experimenter distributed the News Viewing Form (See Appendix A). This set of scales, while also serving as an ostensible purpose of the experiment, was intended to gauge the ability and appropriateness of the stimulus material in eliciting emotional reactions by the subjects.

After completing the form, subjects removed the masking tape and the thermistors while the form was collected. The experimenter resumed the instructional audio tape, which described the next part of the procedure. It was described to the subjects as the second experiment having nothing to do with news in which would be examined their uses and interest in types of television shows and how that related to their attitudes about various life issues.

Subjects were given the "Attitudes About Life Issues" (See Appendix A) and reminded that their responses would be kept in strictest confidence. In order to assure privacy while they filled out the form, subjects on the ends of each row of chairs were asked to take a seat in the corner of the room nearest them. The experimenter sat and performed paperwork functions until the subjects all were finished with the form. Only when the last subject indicated being done by returning to the first page and ceasing to write did the experimenter stand up and collect the forms.

In order to be faithful to the described purpose of the second experiment, the audio instructional tape was played again to describe the "TV Program Preferences" form (See Appendix A) and how to complete it. The experimenter then distributed the form. After subjects completed this form, the experimenter collected them, then thanked the subjects again for participating and gave each one a certificate of appreciation noting their involvement in communication effects research conducted by the Institute for Communication Research. Questions and comments were addressed. Subjects were debriefed and escorted from the building.

RESULTS

Assessment of Effectiveness of Manipulation

In order to determine if the treatment conditions of the five types of news truly influenced the subjects in the desired cognitive and affective ways, subjects were asked to rate the news items in five questions on the News Viewing Form. Those scales asked how arousing, interesting, pleasant, disturbing and absorbing the news stories were overall.

For analysis, three dimensions were used: Arousal (including only the arousal scale), Interest (including interesting and absorbing scales), and Hedonic (including the pleasant and disturbing scales). Scores on disturbing were inverted and then averaged with those on pleasant. A 2 x 5 analysis of variance was performed for type of news (all good, neutral plus good, neutral, neutral plus bad, and all bad) and gender (male and female), and yielded evidence that the stimulus materials performed their intended function. A review of that evidence now follows, as well as a comparison of treatments in each dimension.

Arousal Quality of the News Conditions

Responses by subjects to the question of "how arousing

the news stories were overall" yielded a significant main effect: $F(4,50)=7.61$, $p<.001$. It should be mentioned at this point that no gender or interaction effects were obtained for any of the three stimulus-check dimensions.

Table 1 illustrates that neutral news ($M=3.58$) and neutral plus good news ($M=4.33$) were least arousing. All good news ($M=5.75$), neutral plus bad news ($M= 5.83$) and all bad news ($M=7.17$) were rated as the most arousing. It is interesting here to observe that good news and bad news were considered similarly arousing, contrary to earlier suggestions that implied bad news might be more arousing than good news.

Interest Quality of the News Conditions

Just as in the arousal quality findings, the data for interest quality produced a significant main effect: $F(4,50) =10.45$, $p<.001$. The means associated with the responses to the questions of interest quality of the different news conditions are shown in Table 2. Consistent with previous statements that bad news seems of most interest to viewers, the data show that subjects found the bad news most interesting and absorbing ($M=15.42$) and significantly more so than all good news ($M=12.75$). Both of these news conditions were significantly more interesting and absorbing than

Table 1

Mean Score of Arousal Quality of Types of News

	TYPE OF NEWS					
GENDER	All Good	Neut + Good	Neut	Neut + Bad	All Bad	Gender Means
Females	6.17	4.83	3.83	5.17	8.50	5.70
Males	5.33	3.83	3.33	6.50	5.83	4.97
Mean Arousal Quality	5.75^{bc}	4.33^{ab}	3.58^{a}	5.83^{bc}	7.17^{c}	5.33

Note: Means having different lower case superscripts differ at $p<.05$ by Newman-Keuls' test.

Table 2

Mean Scores of the Amount of Interest in Type of News

	TYPE OF NEWS					
GENDER	All Good	Neut + Good	Neut	Neut + Bad	All Bad	Gender Means
Females	14.17	9.50	8.50	9.67	15.00	11.37
Males	11.33	9.33	7.67	12.00	15.83	11.23
Mean Amount of Interest	12.75^{b}	9.42^{a}	8.08^{a}	10.83^{ab}	15.42^{c}	11.30

Note: Means having different lower case superscripts differ at $p<.05$ by Newman-Keuls' test.

neutral plus good news (M=9.42) and neutral news (M=8.08; all $p<.05$ by Newman-Keuls' test).

Neutral plus bad news (M=10.83) was found to be significantly less interesting than the all bad news (M=15.42) and not appreciably different than the other conditions in which neutral news appeared. Apparently the heavy dose of all bad news provided greater interest than the neutral plus bad news and all good news, which were not significantly different from each other. The general trend for this characteristic of the news indicates neutral news least interesting, good news more interesting and bad news most interesting.

Hedonic Quality of the News Conditions

The most striking result in the check on effectiveness of the stimulus material emerges in the data on judged quality of how pleasant and disturbing the news stories were. A highly significant main effect was obtained: $F(4,50)=72.29$, $p<.001$. Means for the five news conditions in Table 3 reveal a direct relationship between the positive affective nature of the news and the subjects' positive rating of its hedonic quality.

The conditions of all good, all bad, neutral, and neutral plus bad all provide significant differences when

Table 3

Mean Scores of the Hedonic Quality of Types of News

	TYPES OF NEWS					
GENDER	All Good	Neut + Good	Neut	Neut + Bad	All Bad	Gender Means
Females	16.83	15.00	13.33	5.17	3.00	10.67
Males	17.33	16.17	14.33	8.33	2.50	11.73
Mean Hedonic Quality	17.08^{e}	15.58^{de}	13.83^{cd}	6.75^{b}	2.75^{a}	11.20

Note: The higher the mean value, the more pleasant/less disturbing were the types of news rated by subjects. Means having different lower case superscripts differ at $p<.01$ by Newman-Keuls' test.

compared on subjects' ratings of hedonic quality. The experimenter's attempt to use news stories of descending appeal from highly pleasing in the good news condition to highly aversive in the bad news condition succeeded, according to these data. The good news appeared to be good and the bad news appeared to be bad, with the neutral news approaching good news in mean value ($\underline{M}$=13.83 vs. $\underline{M}$= 17.08 respectively) but still remaining significantly distinctive.

As a verification of the grouping of the stimulus check questions into the three dimensions of arousal, interest and hedonic quality, a factor analysis with oblique (direct oblimin criterion) rotation was applied to the stimulus check scales. This yielded two factors, each with an eigenvalue greater than one, accounting for 84.9 percent of the total variance. The factors reflected two areas of reaction to the news material, grouping arousal, interesting and absorbing scales into factor one, labelled Arousal/Attention, and grouping pleasant and disturbing scales into factor two, labelled Hedonic Quality.

The loading criterion for each factor was set at .75 (See Appendix B). All scales that met the criterion were included in one of the factors. The lowest loading (for arousing) was .814. Intercorrelation between the two

factors was inverse and moderate, with a coefficient of -.45. The more arousing, interesting and absorbing the news was, the less hedonically pleasing.

To assess the effect of the five types of news on the two stimulus check factors, Arousal/Attention and Hedonic Quality, an analysis of variance was performed for each factor. A significant main effect for news conditions was obtained for each factor (Arousal/Attention: $F(4,50)=12.12$, $p<.001$; Hedonic Quality: $F(4,50)=72.58$, $p<.001$). Table 4 contains the means associated with each type of news for factor one, Arousal/Attention. It reveals the expected trend in which all bad news was rated highest ($M=19.95$), followed by all good news ($M=15.91$) and neutral news ($M=9.67$), all significantly different from each other.

The judgments on the Hedonic Quality factor produced significant differences among four of the five conditions. Table 5 contains the means associated with each type of news. All good news was rated highest ($M=15.88$) in hedonic quality, followed in order by neutral ($M=12.78$), neutral plus bad ($M=6.12$) and all bad ($M=2.31$) news, all significantly different from each other. These results indicate a direct relationship between the positive affective nature of the news and the subjects' positive rating of its hedonic quality. The experimenter's attempt to use news

Table 4

Mean Scores for Arousal/Attention Factor

(arousing, interesting and absorbing scales)

	TYPE OF NEWS					
GENDER	All Good	Neut + Good	Neut	Neut + Bad	All Bad	Gender Means
Females	17.51	12.08	10.19	12.99	20.52	14.66
Males	14.30	11.16	9.15	16.21	19.38	14.04
Mean	15.91^{a}	11.62^{bd}	9.67^{b}	14.60^{ad}	19.95^{c}	14.35

Note: Means having different lower case superscripts differ at $p<.05$ by one-tailed t-test.

Table 5

Mean Scores of Hedonic Quality

(pleasant and disturbing scales)

	TYPE OF NEWS					
GENDER	All Good	Neut + Good	Neut	Neut + Bad	All Bad	Gender Means
Females	15.59	13.87	12.26	4.65	2.34	9.74
Males	16.17	15.12	13.30	7.59	2.27	10.89
Mean	15.88[a]	14.49[ab]	12.78[b]	6.12[c]	2.31[d]	10.32

Note: Means having different lower case superscripts differ at $p<.05$ by one-tailed t-test.

stories of decreasing appeal from highly pleasing in the all good news cindition to highly aversive in the all bad news condition succeeded, according to the data.

Effects of News on Assessment of Life Issues

In the "Attitudes About Life Issues" questionnaire were placed "buffer" questions (#1,2,3 and 4) to prevent subjects from suspecting the true nature of the study. These questions were not relevant to the issues the experimenter wished to measure and were omitted from analysis without inspection. The remaining 40 questions were subjected to principal-components factor analysis in order to reduce the measures to a workable number.

Since there was no reason to suspect that the factor structures underlying the 40 scales were unrelated, oblique (direct oblimin criterion) rotation was applied in order to aid interpretation of the factors. This yielded six factors, each with an eigenvalue greater than one, accounting for 73.8 percent of the total variance. The factors reflected distinct areas of the subjects' lives which the experimenter hoped to gauge. A conservative loading criterion was applied (See Appendix C). That is, for a scale to be considered in the composition of a specific factor,

it had to have a loading or weight of at least .68 with loadings not exceeding .48 on any other factor.

The first factor, Harm Apprehension, reflects a concern about harm to self through disease, injurious accidents or violent criminal acts. It considers future possibilities of harm posed in scales 30 through 35.

The second factor, Friendship Satisfaction, deals with scales 7, 8 and 20. Factor three, Harm Avoidance, reflects fortune at avoiding accidents and injury. It involves scales 22 and 23. The fourth factor combines two somewhat unrelated issues of appreciation of parents and economic condition from scales 18 and 19, labelled Parents/Economic.

The fifth factor, Health Satisfaction, addresses current health and lack of major disease in one's life, using scales 12, 21 and 25. Factor six, Appearance Satisfaction, assesses satisfaction with facial and bodily appearance, using scales 16 and 17.

Using factor score coefficients as weights, these six indices were computed. Intercorrelations among the six indices were weak to moderate, with coefficients ranging from .02 to .56. Harm Apprehension was positively related to Friendship Satisfaction (r=.33, p=.005). Concern about harm and contentment with friends were related, though mildly. Harm Apprehension was negatively related to Harm

Avoidance (r=-.33, p=.005) and Parents/Economic (r=-.56, p=.001). The more successful subjects believed themselves to be at avoiding past harm, the less concerned they were about prospects of harm to themselves. The more content they were about their parents and economic condition, the less apprehensive they were about harm.

Friendship Satisfaction was negatively related to satisfaction with parents and economic condition (r=-.34, p=.004). Perhaps the less content one feels about friendships, the more appealing parents seem, or the more they are relied upon and valued. Under such circumstances, satisfactory financial condition also takes on more value.

Harm Avoidance was positively related to Health Satisfaction (r=.47, p=.001) but negatively related to Appearance Satisfaction (r=-.30, p=.009). Subjects who were pleased with their health were also pleased with having avoided harm. The two generally occur together and perhaps one enhances the perceived value of the other. The inverse relationship between having successfully avoided harm and being satisfied with facial and bodily appearance does not lend itself to an obvious explanation. One could logically expect just the opposite.

Health Satisfaction and Appearance Satisfaction were negatively related (r=-.49, p=.001). It might be that some-

one who is dissatisfied with outward appearance can feel some consolation and place a higher value on having good health.

In order to assess the effect of the five types of news on the six life issues factors, an analysis of variance was performed for each factor. Based on all five types of news, only one significant finding emerged, which was a main gender effect on factor four, Parents/Economic: $F(4,50)=9.53$, $p<.003$. The mean responses of females were higher than those of males ($M=28.02$ and 24.93 respectively). Women indicated a greater amount of satisfaction with their parents and their economic condition than did men.

One finding approached significance, which was for main gender effect on Harm Apprehension: $F(4,50)=3.94$, $p=.053$. Females indicated a higher mean apprehension than males ($M=30.12$ and 22.81 respectively).

When the analysis of variance included only the all good, neutral, and all bad news conditions, one significant finding emerged for main gender effect: $F(2,30)=4.65$, $p=.039$. Females showed greater satisfaction than males ($M=27.83$ and 25.60 respectively) on the Parents/Economic factor. No other factors approached an acceptable significance level for main effects.

Suspecting that all good news and all bad news had the

obvious appearance of being highly artificial treatment conditions, very dissimilar to the typical television news fare of "mixed" news (some good, some bad, some neutral), a decision was made to analyze the data based on three types of news: neutral plus good, neutral, and neutral plus bad. It was decided that this might be a more realistic approximation to television news.

Factor two through six yielded non-significance in an analysis of variance, except a gender main effect for factor four: $F(2,30)=5.32$, $p<.028$. Female average response was higher ($M=27.65$) than the male average ($M=24.16$).

Factor one, Harm Apprehension, yielded a significant main effect for condition: $F(2,30)=3.38$, $p<.05$. Table 6 contains the means associated with each type of news. A significant difference emerged between the neutral plus bad news versus neutral plus good and neutral news ($M=33.87$ vs. $M=24.28$ and $M=21.03$; all $p<.05$ by one-tailed t-test). Concern about disease, injurious accidents and violent crime was higher among those who saw bad news mixed with the neutral news, than those who saw neutral news or neutral plus good news.

In relation to the other issues of Friendship Satisfaction, Harm Avoidance, Parents/Economic, Health Satisfaction and Appearance Satisfaction, the three news

Table 6

Mean Scores of the Effect

of Type of News on Harm Apprehension

	TYPE OF NEWS			
GENDER	Neutral + Good	Neutral	Neutral + Bad	Gender Means
Females	27.73	19.99	38.56	28.76
Males	20.83	22.08	29.19	24.03
Mean Harm Apprehension	24.28[a]	21.03[a]	33.87[b]	26.40

Note: Means having different lower case superscripts differ at $p<.05$ by one-tailed t-test.

conditions did not bring about significant differences in subjects' ratings, nor approach acceptable significance levels. Thus the data failed to support the original hypothesis that bad news would cause subjects to feel more satisfaction about their own lives than subjects who view good news or neutral news.

News and Emotional Stability

The questionnaire used to measure satisfaction about various aspects of life (See "Attitudes About Life Issues" form in Appendix A) included several questions about one's personality. Among them was the question of "how emotionally stable" the subjects felt. As seen in Table 7 (results from a 2 x 5 analysis of variance with type of news and gender), subjects felt most stable after seeing all good news ($\underline{M}$=9.17). Interestingly, the means descend in order from all good news to all bad news, with all bad news resulting in the least stability ($\underline{M}$=7.08).

Such a dynamic is exactly the opposite of what might be expected, namely that such misfortunes and instability felt by those news characters should cause the viewer to feel more stable by comparison. Quite the contrary, the all bad news made subjects feel least emotionally stable, and the all good news made subjects feel most emotionally stable.

Table 7

Mean Scores of Self-Judged

Emotional Stability by Type of News

	TYPE OF NEWS					
GENDER	All Good	Neut + Good	Neut	Neut + Bad	All Bad	Gender Means
Females	9.17	9.00	8.50	8.50	7.17	8.47
Male	9.17	8.50	8.67	6.50	7.00	7.97
Mean Emotional Stability	9.17^{a}	8.75^{ab}	8.58^{ab}	7.50^{ab}	7.08^{b}	8.22

Note: Scale ranges from 0 through 10. The higher the value, the higher the self-judged emotional stability. Means having different lower case superscripts differ at $p<.05$ by Newman-Keuls' test.

DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation indicate that (a) bad news tends to be judged as being more interesting than good news, (b) bad news tends to make viewers feel more apprehensive about potential harm to themselves than does good news, and (c) bad news may make viewers feel less emotionally stable than good news. On the other hand, the results give no support whatsoever to the proposal of an inverse relationship between the affective nature of news (good vs. bad) and the degree of satisfaction with aspects of the viewer's own life, such as health or physical appearance.

The phenomenon of attraction to and interest in bad news found support. While subjects judged bad news least pleasing, they found it most interesting and absorbing. This is consistent with the proposition that, although viewers experience sadness and empathic distress with suffering victims in the news, those viewers at the same time are interested in such stirring information. Table 8 illustrates the ranking of the means of the types of news stories. Bad news appears most arousing and most interesting/absorbing, yet least pleasing/most disturbing. Neutral news holds last place in both dimensions. This supports

Table 8

Comparative Ranking of Types of News on Arousal, Interest and Hedonic Quality

	QUALITY DIMENSION		
Rank	Arousal	Interest	Hedonic
1	All Bad 7.17	All Bad 15.42	All Good 17.08
2	Neutral + Bad 5.83	All Good 12.75	Neutral + Good 15.58
3	All Good 5.75	Neutral + Bad 10.83	Neutral 13.83
4	Neutral + Good 4.33	Neutral + Good 9.42	Neutral + Bad 6.75
5	Neutral 3.58	Neutral 8.08	All Bad 2.75

Note: Ranking of story types is based on mean values for news condition. Interest dimension was obtained by combining responses to questions asking "how interesting" and "how absorbing" the news stories were overall. Hedonic dimension was obtained by combining responses to questions asking "how pleasing" and "how disturbing" the news stories were overall (inverting the disturbing score).

Bogart's contention (1980) that news provides an affective experience that does more than inform and satisfy curiosity. The stirring of one's affective state, just as in melodrama and suspense, is an integral part of viewers' experience of television news. Even if highly unpleasant, news that is highly charged emotionally seems more arousing and interesting than news that stirs little or no affect.

Harm Apprehension seems to be fostered by exposure to bad news. Subjects who saw neutral plus bad news expressed more concern about disease, injurious accidents and violent crime than those exposed to neutral or neutral plus good news. These results suggest a "priming effect" in line with Wyer and Srull's (1980) model of social information processing that addresses the means by which information is stored in memory and subsequently affects recall, interpretation of new information, and judgments based on this information. The incoming information is organized and encoded into schema that later "prime" or influence judgments of persons or events relevant to the schema or information on which the schema are based. Additionally, these schema might influence the encoding of subsequent incoming information. Representations of one event, furthermore, might affect subsequent judgments about similar events. Subjects in the current study whose stimulus material included bad

bad news may have been primed to then perceive a higher amount of harm apprehension in their own lives than if they had not seen the bad news.

Srull and Wyer (1979) carried out an experiment in which they primed the concept of kindness in an initial word relationship task requiring construction of complete sentences. Subjects were divided into experimental conditions varying the number of priming words. In a second ostensibly unrelated task of "impression formation," subjects read an ambiguous paragraph about a person's behavior, and then judged various attributes of the person. The data indicated a direct, monotonic relationship between the assigned attributes related to the primed attribute in the second task and the number of priming items in the initial task. The experimenters argued that priming a specific trait can increase the availability of a general schema related to that trait, and subsequently influence the judgment of other more ambiguous behaviors or conditions.

The original information upon which the schema are based, if not used soon after input into the "work space," is removed. Therefore, subjects recalling information might be utilizing stored schema instead of the original material. Wyer and Srull suggest that the length of time the original material remains in the "work space" could be

a function of completion of processing objectives, or the expected imminent need for the information for a task. However, they also propose that priming is likely to occur and increase in likelihood with the passage of time if the "work space" has been cleared. As a result, subsequent processing relies only on the encoded schema, not on the original information.

The news the subjects in the current study saw was not needed for the completion of any task. They were told that only physiological measures would be obtained while they watched and afterwards their reactions to the news via a questionnaire would be assessed. The subjects expected no imminent recall tasks, nor were they instructed to try to remember any information contained in the news stories.

It is possible that, after the news stories ended, or after answering the initial questionnaire gauging their reactions to the news stories, subjects removed any information about the news stories from their work space. A second, seemingly unrelated experiment was described to them, and then they answered the Attitudes About Life Issues form. The harm apprehension scales, #30 through #35, did not specifically relate or refer to the news stories the subjects had seen. Yet those who viewed the neutral plus bad news differed significantly from the other two

treatments of neutral news and neutral plus good news. Specifically, they expressed more apprehension regarding contraction of and death from a fatal disease, and handicapping or fatal injuries from car accidents or crime, compared to subjects in the other conditions.

This result lends support to the priming concept. Those who were exposed to information about the deaths of young people in a car crash and an amusement park fire might have encoded schema about life-threatening conditions, and used those schema when later making judgments about harm apprehension in their own lives, perceiving a greater risk than subjects in the other conditions. It must be noted that such priming was specific to only this realm of the subjects' lives, and not to other realms, such as friendship or health satisfaction.

The priming interpretation is compatible with and supported by the concept of spreading activation proposed by Collins and Loftus (1975). According to this concept, when the brain activates a thought element, this activation can spread from the originating node (a thought, feeling or memory) to other nodes by way of associative pathways in the brain. The result is an increased likelihood that, for some time after the thought is activated, this thought element or other thought elements connected by the associated pathways will be processed into awareness by the brain.

Such an explanation could account for the tendency of subjects who saw the neutral plus bad news to express more harm apprehension within five to 10 minutes of exposure than subjects who saw the other news conditions.

Yet caution must be exercised in accepting these findings because of the characteristics of the stimulus material. Subjects in this study were in their late teens. The bad news stories in the neutral plus bad condition involved high school driver education students killed in a violent auto crash and high school students killed in an amusement park fire. The closeness in age between subjects and victims could have exerted a confounding influence on the responses of subjects who saw these stories, compared to subjects who were exposed to stories that did not include the age similarity in the neutral and neutral plus good conditions. Another confounding influence could have been introduced because of a lack of counterpart stories dealing with physical safety in the neutral and neutral plus good conditions. Subjects' responses in the neutral plus bad condition could therefore be attributable to characteristics that did not have equivalent counterparts in the other stimulus conditions.

Also uncovered was the very interesting phenomenon that subjects felt more stable after good news and least

stable after bad news. Perhaps it is possible that seeing the bad news is a reminder of the delicate boundary that seems to exist between security and crisis in the human condition. For example, seeing news of a fatal car accident heightens the awareness of the ever-present danger of automobile-related misfortune that potentially exists when one uses the highways. This heightened awareness could be the triggering mechanism of insecurity and vulnerability associated with emotional instability.

Persons who do view news might find it helpful to be aware that prevalent bad news could have an emotionally destabilizing effect, either short-term or sustained. This does not suggest avoiding the news, but being aware of the effect and structuring one's behavior following the news in order to minimize the aversive impact the emotional destabilization could have on one's behavior. Further research is necessary about this because of the serious implications of its effect on interpersonal relationships as well as emotional health.

Contrary to initial expectations, heightened satisfaction with various aspects of one's life after exposure to bad news did not occur. The data failed to support the rationales of social comparison processes (Festinger, 1954), adaptation-level theory (Helson, 1964) and contrast effects

(Manstead, et.al., 1983) outlined earlier. The investigation was not able to establish an inverse relationship between the affective nature of news and the degree of satisfaction with aspects of one's life. The results fail to support the contention by Levy (1977, 1978) that television news makes viewers feel better about their own lives. The puzzling behavior of attraction to bad news seems more bewildering than ever.

In future paths of inquiry to investigate this phenomenon of attraction to bad news, several thoughts deserve consideration. It can not be ruled out that the viewer might sense heightened satisfaction about his/her own life at some time after seeing bad news. Perhaps it occurs seconds afterwards and quickly dissipates. Perhaps it occurs longer than five or 10 minutes after exposure. Perhaps it depends on the presence of stimuli that foster reflection about self. From viewer to viewer, drastic differences may exist. It is possible that subsequent reports by viewers that they felt better about their own lives after watching the news is a recalled memory of a fleeting sensation experienced as a result of a specific story which the viewers found profoundly relevant to their own lot, and not necessarily because of the general negative emotional quality of the news stories. If this

is the case and few subjects see a salient story profoundly relevant to their own lot, they might not experience the enhanced satisfaction that had been hypothesized.

Subjects were required to make judgments about how pleasant and disturbing the news stories were. It could be that because the subjects reflected upon these judgments and committed themselves to a rating of the material, this rating set up an attitude in the subjects which interferred with or influenced judgments they made about their own life situations. As a result, instead of rating aspects of their own lives opposite from the affective quality of the news stories (good or bad), they judged these various aspects as similar to the news story condition to which they were exposed. The judged assessment and committment to it when answering the questionnaire could have set the tone of the subjects' subsequent judgments of their own lives.

Perhaps the hardest-hitting bad news was too hard-hitting because it involved violent, painful death of teen-agers close in age to the subjects. When the news is too anguishing and "too close to home," it might overpower the social comparison dynamic because it is so affectively stirring and cognitively disrupting.

One other possibility these findings suggest is that the contrast dynamic is a two-part process which does not

always operate fully. The viewer might not make a comparison between news information and his/her personal life. It also could be that the viewer does sense that persons in the news stories are very unfortunate, but upon reflection, decides that his/her own life is far from satisfactory, too, consistent with the priming concept described earlier. Future research about the attraction to and interest in bad news will have to address these considerations.

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APPENDIX A
SUBJECT RESPONSE FORMS

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Consent Form for Human Subjects Research

I hereby acknowledge that the procedures to be used in the studies in which I am to participate have been explained to me, that I understand them, and that I have been informed of my right to withdraw from the experiments in case any treatment — such as materials to which I will be exposed — should offend or unduly disturb or upset me. I further attest that I am of legal age (18 years old or older).

_____

(name — please print)

_____

(signature) (date)

NEWS VIEWING FORM

Please answer the following questions about the news stories you just watched.

(1) How <u>arousing</u> were the news stories overall?

not at all extremely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(2) How <u>interesting</u> were the news stories overall?

not at all extr mely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(3) How <u>pleasant</u> were the news stories overall?

not at all extremely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(4) How <u>disturbing</u> were the news stories overall?

not at all extremely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(5) How <u>absorbing</u> were the news stories overall?

not at all extremely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please circle the <u>average</u> number of minutes you watch these news programs on weekdays (Monday through Friday).

(6) Local news on channel 6, 8, or 13 from 5-6 pm.

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60

(7) National news on channel 6, 8, or 13 from 6-6:30 pm.

0 5 10 15 20 25 30

(8) Local news on channel 6, 8, or 13 from 10-10:30 pm.

: : : : : : :
0 5 10 15 20 25 30

Please circle the <u>average</u> number of minutes you watch these programs on Saturdays.

(9) Local news on channel 6, 8, or 13 from 5-5:30 pm.

: : : : : : :
0 5 10 15 20 25 30

(10) Local news on channel 6, 8, or 13 from 10-10:30 pm.

: : : : : : :
0 5 10 15 20 25 30

Please circle the <u>average</u> number of minutes you watch these news programs on Sundays.

(11) Local news on channel 6, 8, or 13 from 5-5:30 pm.

: : : : : : :
0 5 10 15 20 25 30

(12) Local news on channel 6, 8, or 13 from 10-10:30 pm.

: : : : : : :
0 5 10 15 20 25 30

ATTITUDES ABOUT LIFE ISSUES

On this questionnaire we would like to get your responses to questions about various issues in your life. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. Please take your time and be sure to answer every question. Thank you. Please begin now.

(1) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your grades in school so far?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(2) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the quality of instruction in your courses?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(3) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the selection courses you have taken?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(4) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the financial support you have received from your parents?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(5) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the social life provided on campus?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(6) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the friendships you made before you came to college?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(7) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the friendships you have made here in college?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(8) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the number of friends you have been able to make here at IU?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(9) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the amount of money you possess?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(10) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the clothes you own?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(11) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the stereo or radio equipment you own?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied						extremely satisfied
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(12) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your health in general?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied					extremely satisfied	
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(13) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your physical condition?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied					extremely satisfied	
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(14) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your athletic ability?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied					extremely satisfied	
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(15) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your resistance to disease?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied					extremely satisfied	
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(16) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your facial appearance?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied					extremely satisfied	
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(17) How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the attractiveness of your body?

extremely dissatisfied				neither dissatisfied nor satisfied					extremely satisfied	
:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5

(18) How fortunate do you feel to have the parents you have?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(19) How fortunate do you feel to be in the economic condition you are in?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(20) How fortunate do you feel to have the number of friends you have?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(21) How fortunate do you feel to be as healthy as you are?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(22) How fortunate have you been in avoiding accidents?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(23) How fortunate have you been in avoiding bodily injury?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(24) How fortunate have you been in avoiding being a victim of a violent crime?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

: : : : : : : : : : :
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(25) How fortunate have you been in eluding major diseases in your life?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

: : : : : : : : : : :
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(26) How likely is it that you will make good friends in college that will last a lifetime?

not at all likely — extremely likely

: : : : : : : : : : :
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(27) How likely is it that the friends you have will help you in a crisis?

not at all likely — extremely likely

: : : : : : : : : : :
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(28) How likely is it that after graduating you will quickly achieve a good standard of living?

not at all likely — extremely likely

: : : : : : : : : : :
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(29) How likely is it that you will be in excellent health for the next 20 years?

not at all likely — extremely likely

: : : : : : : : : : :
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(30) How concerned are you about the possibility of contracting a major handicapping disease?

not at all concerned — extremely concerned

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(31) How concerned are you about being in a car accident that handicaps you for life?

not at all concerned — extremely concerned

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(32) How concerned are you that you will be the victim of a violent crime that handicaps you?

not at all concerned — extremely concerned

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(33) How concerned are you that you will get a fatal disease that kills you (such as cancer)?

not at all concerned — extremely concerned

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(34) How concerned are you about being in a car accident that takes your life?

not at all concerned — extremely concerned

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

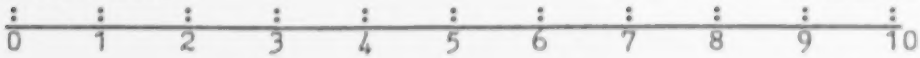
(35) How concerned are you about being a victim of a violent crime that takes your life?

not at all concerned — extremely concerned

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

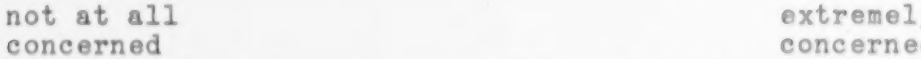
(36) How concerned are you about the possibility of being drafted for combat in a war?

not at all concerned — extremely concerned



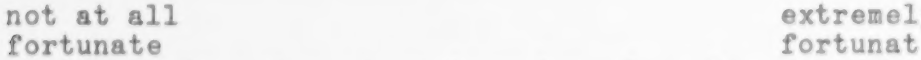
(37) How concerned are you about a nuclear war that will bring the world to an end?

not at all concerned — extremely concerned



(38) How fortunate do you feel to live in a time without war and without a mandatory draft?

not at all fortunate — extremely fortunate

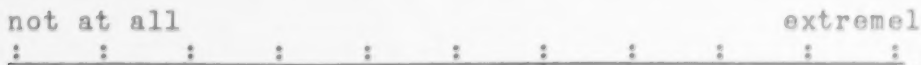


(39) Do you consider yourself to be an emotionally stable person?

not at all — extremely

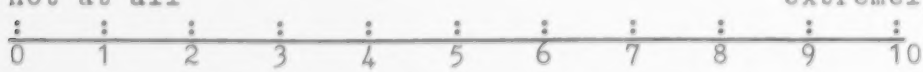
(40) Do you consider yourself to be a lucky person?

not at all — extremely



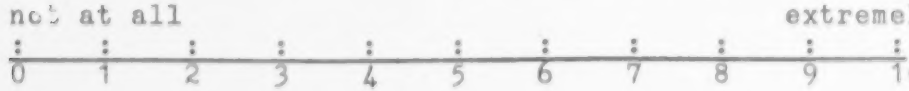
(41) Do you consider yourself to be an emotionally sensitive person?

not at all — extremely



(42) Do you consider yourself to be a caring person?

not at all — extremely



(43) Do you consider yourself to be a creative person?

not at all extremely

: : : : : : : : : : :

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(44) Do you consider yourself to have a good sense of humor?

not at all extremely

: : : : : : : : : : :

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

TV PROGRAM PREFERENCES

In each pair of tv programs listed below, please select the ONE program you prefer to watch. Select one from each pair. You may consult the definitions on page 2 if uncertain about the meaning of the program label.

1. ____ Situation comedy OR ____ Action/adventure
2. ____ Sports OR ____ Soap opera
3. ____ News/documentary OR ____ Crime/detective
4. ____ Variety special OR ____ Situation comedy
5. ____ Soap opera OR ____ Action/adventure
6. ____ Crime/detective OR ____ Sports
7. ____ Variety special OR ____ News/documentary
8. ____ Situation comedy OR ____ Soap opera
9. ____ Action/adventure OR ____ Crime/detective
10. ____ Sports OR ____ Variety special
11. ____ News/documentary OR ____ Situation comedy
12. ____ Crime/detective OR ____ Soap opera
13. ____ Variety special OR ____ Action/adventure
14. ____ News/documentary OR ____ Sports
15. ____ Situation comedy OR ____ Crime/detective
16. ____ Soap opera OR ____ Variety special
17. ____ Action/adventure OR ____ News/documentary
18. ____ Sports OR ____ Situation comedy
19. ____ Crime/detective OR ____ Variety special
20. ____ Soap opera OR ____ News/documentary
21. ____ Action/adventure OR ____ Sports

PROGRAM DEFINITIONS

SITUATION COMEDY - Half-hour show depicting a familiar cast of characters dealing with an awkward or embarrassing situation in a humorous way.

ACTION/ADVENTURE - A show that depicts the resolution of some conflict that pits good against evil and portrays the good as winning out against great odds. Usually involves one or more central "hero" or "heroine" characters.

SOAP OPERA - A continuing series with regular stars embroiled in romantic, social and familial conflicts and experiences.

CRIME/DETECTIVE - The "who-done-its" portraying one or more main characters as the investigators of criminal acts. These characters struggle against great odds to successfully solve the crime and bring the criminals to justice.

VARIETY/SPECIAL - Musical and performance shows taped before a live audience and featuring stars as hosts and guests.

NEWS/DOCUMENTARY - Daily news, special reports and in-depth analysis or investigative reports about real incidents and conditions around the nation and the world.

SPORTS - Live or taped coverage of national and international sporting events of collegiate or professional competitors.

APPENDIX B

FACTOR ANALYSIS PATTERN FOR NEWS STORY MEASURES

Rotated Factor Loading Pattern (direct oblimin criterion) Following Principal Components Extraction from the Correlation Matrix of Five Measures of News Story Qualities.

Type of Judgment of News Stories	Factor 1	Factor 2
1. How arousing were the news stories overall?	.81	-.10
2. How interesting were the news stories overall?	.98	.10
3. How pleasant were the news stories overall?	.09	.99
4. How disturbing were the news stories overall?	-.15	.89
5. How absorbing were the news stories overall?	.88	-.04

APPENDIX C

FACTOR ANALYSIS PATTERN

FOR MEASURES OF LIFE ISSUES

Rotated Factor Loading Pattern (direct oblimin criterion) Following Principal Components Extraction from the Correlation Matrix of 20 Measures of Life Issues

Life Issues Judgments	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
5. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the social life provided on campus?	-.19	.53	-.37	.04	.05	-.18
7. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the friendships you have made here in college?	.13	.86	.03	.03	.02	-.01
8. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the number of friends you have been able to make here at IU?	.03	.89	-.04	-.05	-.06	-.05
12. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your health in general?	.01	.01	-.35	-.13	.69	-.27
16. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your facial appearance?	.05	.14	.03	-.15	-.08	-.89
17. How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the attractiveness of your body?	-.05	-.11	.14	.09	.38	-.81
18. How fortunate do you feel to have the parents you have?	.18	.05	.02	-.86	.10	-.13

Life Issues Judgments	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
19 How fortunate do you feel to be in the economic condition you are in?	.01	-.08	.03	<u>-.78</u>	.13	.09
20. How fortunate do you feel to have the number of friends you have?	.15	<u>.69</u>	.19	-.14	.01	-.01
21. How fortunate do you feel to be as healthy as you are?	-.02	.01	.22	-.27	<u>.82</u>	-.02
22. How fortunate have you been in avoiding accidents?	-.14	.04	<u>.83</u>	-.03	.17	-.18
23. How fortunate have you been in avoiding bodily injury?	-.15	.04	<u>.84</u>	-.10	.10	-.05
25. How fortunate have you been in eluding major diseases in your life?	-.01	.03	.48	.24	<u>.70</u>	-.06
27. How likely is it that the friends you have will help you in a crisis?	.21	.50	.19	-.66	-.12	-.23
30. How concerned are you about the possibility of contracting a major handicapping disease?	<u>.85</u>	-.01	-.16	-.13	-.04	-.08

Life Issues Judgments	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
31. How concerned are you about being in a car accident that handicaps you for life?	.84	.10	.03	-.13	.06	-.20
32. How concerned are you that you will be the victim of a violent crime that handicaps you?	.91	.06	-.01	-.13	-.05	-.07
33. How concerned are you that you will get a fatal disease that kills you (such as cancer)?	.82	.03	-.12	-.20	.02	.20
34. How concerned are you about being in a car accident that takes your life?	.86	.15	-.05	-.06	-.01	.12
35. How concerned are you about being a victim of a violent crime that takes your life?	.92	.05	-.05	-.07	-.13	.06

CHARLES FRANCIS AUST

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1191 Eigenmann
Bloomington, IN 47406
812 337 5797

Permanent address:
110 Walters Avenue
Johnstown, PA 15904
814 266 2143

EXPERIENCE

DIRECT SOCIAL SERVICE TO PUBLIC: As child abuse caseworker, mediated physical and emotional crises involving children, parents, school personnel, courts, foster parents and other social service resources. As drug and alcohol prevention specialist, counseled individuals with drug questions and concerns.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH: As assistant instructor in graduate school, taught undergraduates in courses about communication theory, effects, law, history and television studio production. Helped conduct lab experiments in media effects research. As caseworker, taught communication skills course.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Conducted seminars and lectures about drug and alcohol abuse to all ages of students, parents, educators. Addressed citizens groups about drug and child abuse.

KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY NEEDS: Awareness of commonplace community problems, resource systems and government services, acquired through six years of professional community work.

ELECTRONIC AND PRINT MEDIA: Television studio and field production skills acquired in graduate education. Published quarterly newsletter, issued press releases about agency services and drug information as prevention specialist. Wrote news stories, edited all copy and designed layout as news editor and copy editor of weekly college newspaper. Produced photography, script and design for drug and alcohol agency pamphlet.

EDUCATION: M.A. May 1985, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN in telecommunications
B.S. April 1975, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, PA. Major - psychology

HONORS: Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges. Joseph J. Rapoport Memorial Award for college/community service. Photo award from Pittsburgh Press.

PERSONAL DATA: Born 12-30-52. Single. Excellent health. Willing to travel, relocate. Height 5'10". Weight 160 lb.

CHARLES FRANCIS AUST

Dept. of Mass Communication
West Georgia College
Carrollton, GA 30118
404 836 6518

460 Hays Mill Road, DD 23,
Carrollton, GA 30117
404 836 0300

Education

M.A. Indiana University, Bloomington, IN., in Telecommunications, 1985. GPA=3.8. Thesis: "Judgments of Well-Being After Exposure To Televised Bad and Good News"

B.S. University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, PA. in Psychology, 1975. GPA=3.4.

Teaching Experience

9-85 to the present: Instructor of mass communication in the Dept. of Mass Communication, West Georgia College. Teach basic and advanced courses (typically totalling over 100 students quarterly); advise at least 50 majors each quarter in course selection; supervise internships and independent studies; maintain, distribute, purchase and arrange for repair of portable and studio video equipment; executive producer of quarterly video magazine program produced by students and aired on local cable system.

1-83 to 8-85: Assistant instructor in the Dept. of Telecommunications, Indiana University. Taught and advised in courses about media theory and effects, television studio production, law and ethics, media history, and television and culture. Assisted professors in planning and conducting survey and experimental research.

Other Professional Experience

1-80 to 8-82: Drug and Alcohol Prevention Specialist, Armstrong-Indiana County Drug and Alcohol Commission, Shelocta, PA. Conducted seminars and presentations about drug and alcohol abuse prevention, published newsletter, consulted with school officials about drug abuse prevention, provided counseling and referral to treatment services, maintained and distributed audio-visual and print material.

2-77 to 1-80: Caseworker, Cambria County Family and Children's Services, Ebensburg, PA. Provided protective services and counseling to children and teenagers, worked with school officials to alleviate truancy of students, coordinated services with foster homes, institutions, courts and mental health agencies, taught Parent Effectiveness Training and investigated child abuse complaints.

Courses Taught

Introduction to Mass Communication
Principles of Broadcasting (non-production focus)
Beginning Television Studio Production
Advanced Television Studio Production
Portable Video Production
Photojournalism
Effects and Uses of Mass Communication
Television Practicum (culminating in quarterly video magazine program airing on local cable system)
Theory and Effects of Telecommunication (as an IU grad student)
Television Production (as an IU grad student)

Research and Scholarship

"Effects of an Opposite-Gender Companion's Affect to Horror on Distress, Delight, and Attraction" in Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1986, Vol. 51, No. 3, 586-594. Authored by Dolf Zillmann, James B. Weaver, Norbert Mundorf and Charles F. Aust.

"Judgments of Well-Being After Exposure to Televised Bad and Good News." My thesis for Master of Arts degree at Indiana Univ.

"Critical Viewing Skills: Educating About Television and Through Television" by Charles F. Aust. West Georgia College Review. Vol. 18, May 1986, 31-38.

"Relationship-Enhancing Communication Skills in The Cosby Show." Paper presented at the Georgia Speech Communication Association annual conference in Macon, GA. Feb. 1988.

"Electronic Communication and the Intolerance of Delay." Paper presented at the International Conference on Revolution in Literature and the Visual Arts in Atlanta, GA. Oct. 1989.

"Using Client's Religious Values in Counseling" accepted for publication in Counseling and Values, Jan. 1990.

"Workshop and Resources to Guide Parents in Supervision of Children's Television Use." Multi-session seminar package.

Textbook revision assistance to W.C. Brown publishers regarding two mass communication textbooks.

Service to the College

Moderator of panel discussions about sexuality, women's issues, terrorism and other topics - sponsored by Student Development Center and various faculty
Co-coordinator of annual departmental Media Day (media job recruitment of our majors)
Advisor of student chapter of Georgia Association of Newscasters
Devised storage and distribution system for portable video equipment used by our majors
Drug and Alcohol Education Committee member
Responsible Sexuality Committee member
Student Services Committee member
Minority Enrichment Program presenter
Freshman Orientation Advisor
Panel chair at International Conference on Revolution in Literature and the Visual Arts sponsored by West Georgia College, 1989.
Panel chair at International Conference on Wit and Humor sponsored by West Georgia College, 1986.
Campus Activity Awards Selection Committee member
Generated internship opportunities for our mass comm majors
Set up job board and job announcement system for our majors
Textbook purchase recommendations for our department and library
Participant subject in two national surveys about higher education

Service to the Community

Adult Enrichment Committee member (church-related)
Communication skills presentations to various civic, school and professional groups
Video consultant to Gateway Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center
Church choir member
Optimist Club essay judge

Memberships

American Association of University Professors
Speech Communication Association
Georgia Speech Communication Association
Georgia Association of Newscasters